

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

22nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2003

HINCHEY ISSUES STATEMENT ON DEATH OF SENATOR MOYNIHAN

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today released the following statement upon hearing of the death of former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan:

"Pat Moynihan always appeared larger than life. From the day he arrived in the Senate as a freshman in 1977, he was not just another senator. He always stood apart.

"He was valued, and will continue to be valued, for his wisdom on a kaleidoscopic range of subjects, his prescient and nuanced analysis of social problems, his persistent and eloquent defense of government support for the poor and disadvantaged long after that position had become unfashionable, his role in international affairs as participant and observer, as courtly diplomat and passionate defender of democracy and freedom. Senator Moynihan's own example -his independence of mind, his indifference to fashion, his rejection of cant and conventional wisdom- is perhaps the best demonstration of why his favorite cause -the dignity of the free individual soul- matters so much. Perhaps the proudest achievement of our country and our democratic system is that we allow people like Daniel Patrick Moynihan to speak their minds, and to rise to power.

"Any list of his achievements will be long. But we New Yorkers have some more particular and parochial reasons to thank him and to honor him, and reasons to be proud that we sent him to the Senate. He was born in Oklahoma and spent much of his professional life before he came to the Senate in Massachusetts. But we New Yorkers embraced him as he embraced us, and we will always be proud to count him as one of us.

"His particular legacy to New York lies in his understanding that the lives of free individuals can be enhanced by the beauty and grandeur of all that surrounds them -the landscape, the streetscape, and the history that underlies them. So he made it his mission to see that our home, New York, would retain its distinguished features and add to its beauty and elegance.

"It is telling that Pat Moynihan did not put his greatest efforts into the more obvious treasures of the state, or into monuments to the great and famous. Instead, he committed himself to enhancing everyday life, and into landmarks that spoke of the dignity of ordinary people, the efforts of the forgotten, and the conviction that every person matters. So throughout his Senate career he worked to protect the landmarks of the women's rights movement in Seneca Falls, because he knew that the more celebrated proclamations of liberty in Philadelphia rang a little hollow for more than half the American people.

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He worked equally hard to give federal recognition to the Erie and Champlain Canals in New York, because he knew that the working folk who dug the ditches and piloted the boats whose names we have forgotten were more responsible for the westward expansion of our country and the opportunities it opened than the more celebrated frontier explorers. He worked to protect Governors Island in New York Harbor-the island most people ignored because its work was the daily grind of protecting the harbor, the overlooked work that sustains us. He directed federal funds to the protection of an ordinary businessman's house in Buffalo because that little known man, Darwin Martin, had the daring and foresight to build a place of no pretension but great beauty by hiring an unregarded architect named Frank Lloyd Wright.

"Pat Moynihan did not just look to protect our history, however. In a time when public buildings and public spaces were given little regard, and their design was contracted to the low bidder, he insisted that public spaces where ordinary people pass daily and conduct their mundane business should remind them of their dignity and the soaring ideals of the American endeavor. So he insisted that the new courthouses in New York should be fine, even grand places, and he devoted himself to the rebirth of Pennsylvania Station as a place of splendor, a worthy replacement for the building we lost when people believed that public spaces should be drab and functional. Of course here in Washington we know that it was Pat Moynihan, more than any other person, who saw to it that Pennsylvania Avenue was also reborn, and again became a place of elegance and beauty appropriate to its place as the main boulevard of our capital.

"Typically, though, Pat Moynihan did not focus on just a few great buildings and monumental spaces. One of his finest achievements was his imaginative and inventive idea for financing what he called "enhancements" with highway money -parks, gardens, beautification, historic restoration, and other improvements of the landscape and the community- available to every place touched by a federally funded highway. Most of these enhancements are small changes in ordinary communities, changes that touch the life and lift the spirits of all those who see them and use them. Most of those don't know that Pat Moynihan had anything to do with them, but they may be one of his most lasting legacies to our nation.

"Pat Moynihan made his home in New York, appropriately at the crossroads of the ordinary and the ideal-a tiny rural settlement named in honor of a classical poet, the hamlet of Pindar's Corners. His home there was at the same time a modest rural farmhouse and a Greek temple, a common nineteenth century architectural style in upstate New York, but one rarely seen today. This blending of the common, the human, the mundane, and of the highest ideals and greatest dignity is a reflection of America at its best, what this country is all about. Nothing could be more appropriate for the man who best reflected that same vision, Daniel Patrick Moynihan."